



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/910,854	07/24/2001	Isao Nakatani	2001_1048A	4033

513 7590 01/22/2004

WENDEROTH, LIND & PONACK, L.L.P.
2033 K STREET N. W.
SUITE 800
WASHINGTON, DC 20006-1021

EXAMINER

UMEZ ERONINI, LYNETTE T

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

1765

DATE MAILED: 01/22/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/910,854

Applicant(s)

NAKATANI ET AL.

Examiner

Lynette T. Umez-Eronini

Art Unit

1765

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 11 December 2003.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-35 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 6-35 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-5 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☒ Claim(s) 6-35 are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application) since a specific reference was included in the first sentence of the specification or in an Application Data Sheet. 37 CFR 1.78.
a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121 since a specific reference was included in the first sentence of the specification or in an Application Data Sheet. 37 CFR 1.78.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

1. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

2. Claims 1 and 4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Nakatani (Computer generated, English translation of JP 11092971 A).

Nakatani teaches, "Ti, Mg, Al, Ge, Pt, Pd or alloys or compounds essentially comprising these elements hardly react with CO-NH₃ gas plasma so they are suitable as a mask material . . . The objective material of etching is preferably a magnetic permalloy or the like . . . The etching plasma gas is preferably a mixture of CO and a nitrogen-contg. compound such as NH₃ and amines [SOLUTION]. The aforementioned reads on,

A masking material for dry etching of a magnetic material by using a mixed gas of carbon monoxide and a nitrogenous compound as etching gas, in **claim 1**; and

A masking material for dry etching of a magnetic material by using a mixed gas of carbon monoxide and a nitrogenous compound as etching gas, which comprises a metal other than tantalum, in **claim 4**.

Since Nakatani uses the same etchant to contact the same masking material as that of the claimed invention, then using Nakatani method of etching a magnetic material with an metallic mask would inherently read on, a metal having a specific

Art Unit: 1765

physical property that its melting or boiling point, when it is converted into a nitride or carbide is higher than that of in the form of single metal, wherein the masking material is in contact with the etching gas, as in claim 1 and a metal other than tantalum having a specific physical property that its melting or boiling point, when it is converted into a nitride or carbide is higher than that of in the form of single metal, wherein the masking material is in contact with the etching gas, **in claim 4.**

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

5. Claim 2, 3, and 5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nakatani (JP 11092971 A) as applied to claims 1 and 4 above, and further in view of Xing et al. (US 6,090,697).

Nakatani differs in failing to teach the masking material wherein the metal is tantalum, **in claim 2**; and tungsten, zirconium or hafnium, **in claims 3 and 5**.

Xing teaches, "Examples of alternative hardmask materials include the following: Ti--N, Ta--N, . . . Hf--N, . . . , Al--N, . . . alloys of the above with Ti--N, . . . , Ta--N, and W--N" (column 8, lines 29-37), which provides evidence that a masking material comprises tungsten, zirconium or hafnium and that a masking material comprising tantalum can be used as an alternative to the tungsten and hafnium hardmask materials of the claimed invention.

It is the examiner's position that it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the claimed invention to modify Nakatani by using Xing's TaN as an alternative hardmask material and tungsten or hafnium metals as masking materials for the purpose of using "good hardmask material for particular difficult-to-etch materials . . ." (column 2, lines 53-56).

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Lynette T. Umez-Eronini whose telephone number is 571-272-1470. The examiner is normally unavailable on the First Friday.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Nadine Norton can be reached on 571-272-1465.

Application/Control Number: 09/910,854

Page 5

Art Unit: 1765

Lynette T. Umez-Elonini
Itue

January 8, 2004